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Economic and Social Council

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Statistical Commission
Thirty-fourth session
4-7 March 2003
Agenda item 8
Report of the Commission on its thirty-fourth session

Draft report

Chapter ___
Organization of the session

A. Opening and duration of the session

1. The Statistical Commission held its thirty-fourth session at United Nations Headquarters from 4 to 7 March 2003. The Commission held ___ meetings (1st to _____).

2. The session was opened by the Chairman of the thirty-third session, Tamas Mellar (Hungary).

B. Attendance

3. The session was attended by ___ States members of the Commission. Observers for other States Members of the United Nations and a non-member State, representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and observers for intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations also attended. The list of participants is contained in annex ___.

[*To be completed*]

C. Election of officers

4. At its 1st meeting, on 4 March, the Commission elected the following officers by acclamation:

Chairman:
Tamas Mellar (Hungary)

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Vice-Chairmen:
K. K. Jaswal (India)
Gilberto Calvillo Vives (Mexico)
Katherine Wallman (United States)

Rapporteur:
Pali Lehohla (South Africa)

D. Agenda and organization of work

5. At its 1st meeting, on 4 March, following a statement by the observer of Palestine, the Commission adopted the provisional agenda contained in document E/CN.3/2003/1, as orally amended, as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Demographic and social statistics:
   (a) Population and housing censuses;
   (b) Health statistics;
   (c) Social statistics;
   (d) Washington Group on Disability Measurement.
4. Economic statistics:
   (a) National accounts;
   (b) Measuring the new economy;
   (c) Agriculture statistics;
   (d) Statistics of services (programme review);
   (e) International Comparison Programme;
   (f) International merchandise trade statistics;
   (g) Statistics of international trade in services;
   (h) Finance statistics;
   (i) Ottawa Group on Price Indexes;
   (j) Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics.
5. Natural resources and environment statistics.
6. Activities not classified by field:
   (a) International economic and social classifications;
   (b) Harmonization of indicators and reporting on progress towards the millennium development goals;
   (c) Statistical capacity-building;
   (d) Follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions;

(e) Coordination and integration of statistical programmes;

(f) Programme questions (United Nations Statistics Division.

7. Provisional agenda and dates for the thirty-fifth session of the Commission.

8. Report of the Commission on its thirty-fourth session.

6. At the same meeting, following statements by the representatives of Morocco (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China) and Greece (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union), the Commission approved the organization of the work of the session (E/CN.3/2003/L.1), as orally revised.

7. Also at the same meeting, the Commission agreed to the participation in its thirty-fourth session of the following intergovernmental organizations: Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa and Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics.

E. Documentation

8. The list of documents before the Commission at its thirty-fourth session is contained in annex ___.

[*To be completed*]

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Addendum

Rapporteur: Pali **Lehohla** (South Africa)

Chapter _____
Demographic and social statistics

A. Population and housing censuses

1. The Commission considered item 3 (a) of its agenda at its _____ meeting, on 4 March 2003. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2003/2).

Action taken by the Commission

2. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2003/2) and the activities proposed in paragraphs 4 to 17 of the report, emphasizing that they would need to be completed by 2006 if they were to respond to the requirements of countries and contribute to the planning of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses;

(b) Recommended the inclusion of the following additional activities:

(i) Development of guidelines and sharing of experience in the use of the Internet in census data collection and dissemination, and development of new technologies for data capturing, particularly scanning, to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness;

(ii) Preparation of technical documents on taking stock of the successes and failures in the 2000 round of national censuses;

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(iii) Post-enumeration surveys based on national experience from the 2000 round of censuses;

(iv) Use of geographical information systems (GIS) and digital mapping in data collection and dissemination;

(v) Further work on the use of new technology, such as GIS, to capture data on human settlements, including slums;

(c) Suggested the addition of the following themes for the 2004 symposium:

(i) Mobilization of broad public acceptance and support for census activities;

(ii) Approaches to the collection and dissemination of data on race and ethnicity;

(d) Requested the development of a handbook to complement the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*, and the organization of workshops to review and assess national experience in implementation, facilitating future revisions of the *Recommendations*;

(e) Requested that population and housing censuses be an integral part of the national statistical systems, and emphasized the need to ensure full coordination with surveys, as well as administrative recording systems;

(f) Requested further work to identify instruments that could be used to ensure accurate and reliable measurement of population change during the intersessional periods.

B. Health statistics

3. The Commission considered item 3 (b) of its agenda at its 1st meeting, on 4 March 2003. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the World Health Organization (WHO) (E/CN.3/2003/3);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (E/CN.3/2003/4);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Central Statistics Office of Botswana (E/CN.3/2003/5);

(d) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Statistical Office of the European Communities (E/CN.3/2003/6).

Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

(a) Expressed concern about the lack of consultation, coordination and collaboration between WHO, on the one hand, and national statistical offices, and regional and international organizations, on the other;

(b) Emphasized that the responsibility for primary data collection lies with countries, who report aggregate statistics to international organizations, while international organizations assist in the development of statistical standards and provide technical support to countries;

(c) Reiterated the need for:

(i) Transparency and openness in the methods used to compile and generate health statistics;

(ii) Coordinated use of the existing sources of health statistics available in national systems;

(d) Expressed support for the work of WHO on national health accounts and the WHO family of international classifications, and requested guidelines on the preparation of national health accounts;

(e) Proposed that guidelines be prepared on implementing the automated coding system for recording cause of death;

(f) Requested WHO, in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and other relevant bodies of the United Nations system, to explore alternative methods of estimating the prevalence of HIV/AIDS;

(g) Requested the creation of a friends of the Chair group to examine coordination among national statistical offices and international organizations in the production and dissemination of health statistics, recommend actions to be taken for improvement and report back to the Commission;

(h) Requested that the sub-item "Health statistics" remain on the agenda of forthcoming sessions of the Commission.

C. Social statistics

5. The Commission considered item 3 (c) of its agenda at its 1st meeting, on 4 March 2003. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2003/7) and a note by the Secretary-General transmitting a report prepared by the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom (E/CN.3/2003/10).

Action taken by the Commission

6. The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General and endorsed the activities proposed in paragraph 16 of the report;

(b) With respect to the expert group meeting on setting the scope of social statistics, the Commission:

(i) Endorsed the proposal of the United Nations Statistics Division to hold an expert group meeting in May 2003, in collaboration with the Siena Group on Social Statistics;

(ii) Underscored the need for the expert group meeting to be focused, deliver clear outcomes and develop a time frame for achieving the set goals;

(iii) Urged the expert group meeting to review current mechanisms for coordinating activities in social statistics, with particular attention to setting good practices and standards;

(iv) Recommended that the expert group take into account the progress made in the area of development indicators;

(v) Suggested that the expert group consider the implications for social statistics contained in the report of the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom;

(c) With respect to the international collection of disability statistics:

(i) Supported the collection of disability statistics through the *Demographic Yearbook* system;

(ii) Emphasized the need to ensure the collection of internationally comparable disability statistics;

(iii) Encouraged the United Nations Statistics Division to work with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics to identify items for which statistical information on disability was comparable;

(iv) Advised a judicious and complementary use of the sources of disability statistics and information, namely, censuses, surveys and administrative records;

(d) With respect to poverty statistics:

(i) Endorsed the proposal to prepare a compendium on best practices in poverty statistics;

(ii) Urged that the compendium address the needs of developing countries and have an applied focus, and stressed the importance of its timely and progressive release;

(iii) Urged for proactive consultation with other institutions that have expertise in poverty data collection and measurement;

(e) Recommended the compilation of gender-relevant statistics.

D. Washington Group on Disability Measurement

7. The Commission considered item 3 (d) of its agenda at its 1st meeting, on 4 March 2003. It had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Washington Group on Disability Measurement (E/CN.3/2003/8).

Action taken by the Commission

8. The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Washington Group, and noted that disability was a complex and difficult area of statistical measurement.

(b) Advised caution in the policy use of information generated from general measures of disability since the purpose and use of data on disability might require a range of disability measures.

Chapter _____
Economic statistics

B. Measuring the new economy

9. The Commission considered item 4 (b) of its agenda at its second meeting, on 4 March 2003. It had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom (E/CN.3/2003/10).

Action taken by the Commission

10. The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom, which comprehensively summarized the many topical issues concerning the new economy;

(b) Recognized the fact that the phenomenon known as the "new economy" involved advanced levels of knowledge and information and communication technologies and led to rapid changes on a global scale. It affected many statistical domains, especially service statistics, and entailed very complex conceptual issues, including measurement, one of which could involve changes in comparative advantage and how wealth was created;

(c) Endorsed the recommendation that (i) international bodies set clear priorities for research on important issues, (ii) close cooperation between international bodies and national statistical offices and sharing of good practice was required to move the agenda forward;

(d) Supported the emphasis of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development on providing speedy and clear recommendations on how to achieve recommended outputs;

(e) Welcomed the initiatives of countries, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the Economic Commission for Europe to contribute to research and organize expert meetings and workshops.